

MAR 24 1966

STATINTL

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Reporting Can Bring Heartaches

By Drew Pearson

A lot of people have been writing Jack Anderson and me about Sen. Thomas J. Dodd (D-Conn.). Some have praised the columns regarding his conflict of interest; others have said: How can we be so mean to a fine man who has done so much to expose communism? They imply that because we have exposed an enemy of communism we must be pro-Communist.

I haven't had a chance to reply to most of these letters, but the answer is that we don't get any kick out of exposing—or as some people put it, "crucifying"—any one Senator. It's the Senate standards, the rules of conduct, that are important.

Reporting on these things is by no means pleasant. In the first place, it's a terrific job to dig out all the material—Jack Anderson has been taken away from all other work in order to report on Sen. Dodd. The material just doesn't fall in your lap from a disgruntled employe, as Dodd has insinuated. In the second place, this kind of reporting sometimes leads to very unhappy results.

One man, Sen. John Bank-

head of Alabama, may have died because of an earlier column series on conflict of interest. His family, who were good friends of mine (his brother, Speaker Will Bankhead, having once lived in my house), always blamed me for the Senator's death.

You feel terrible when this kind of thing happens. But you don't know when you start investigating that a Senator has a weak heart; and you don't always know how deep a conflict of interest runs.

Casualty of a Column

In Bankhead's case, the column, after long and expensive research on the commodity market in New York, had discovered in 1946 that Bankhead and Sen. Elmer Thomas of Oklahoma, both Democrats, had an arrangement with a New York broker to invest in cotton just a few hours before they made a speech urging the end of wartime controls on cotton.

Cotton was scarce at that time, shortly after the war, and their speeches sent up the price. After each speech they made money on the commodity market. So did the brokers who were in cahoots with them.

When I published this, Sen. Bankhead died of a heart attack, and Sen. Thomas later was defeated by the voters of Oklahoma.

The columns on Thomas

and Bankhead had another aftermath. Congress had just passed a lobbying law, and a young New York lawyer, Irving Kauffman, had come down from New York to enforce it. He didn't know much about Washington, and was wandering around aimlessly looking for something to sink his teeth into when we suggested that he look into the commodity market operators who had been working with Sens. Thomas and Bankhead, to see whether they had violated the lobbying act by influencing the cotton market without registering as lobbyists.

Kauffman promptly had the speculators indicted and, partly as a result of the attendant publicity, he went on to become a U.S. judge, and incidentally a close friend of Sen. Dodd. They are bosom witchhunters.

What Is Senate Ethics?

Significantly, the Senate did not move to censure or discipline Sen. Thomas for using the high privilege of the Senate floor to influence the price of cotton and cash in on it.

This has become more or less standard practice where a Senator's finances are concerned, and the Ethics Committee today is carefully avoiding a probe of Dodd's finances.

In 1952 this column published many details on the commodity speculation of

Sen. Joseph McCarthy and how he had used thousands of dollars sent him by patriotic citizens to investigate communism for his own personal speculation in the commodity market.

Later Sen. Tom Hennings (D-Mo.), Carl Hayden (D-Ariz.), and Robert Hendrickson (R-N.J.) went into even more detail on McCarthy's speculation. However, the Senate never acted on it.

When it did finally get around to censuring McCarthy two years later, it was not for using other people's money to gamble on the commodity market but for his conduct of the Army-McCarthy hearings.

The man who had the courage to press for the censure of Joe McCarthy in 1952 was a Senator of unusual courage—because few Senators will move against a member of the club. He was Sen. William Benton (D-Conn.) and because of Benton's courage, McCarthy invaded Connecticut in 1952 and defeated him. Two years later the people of Connecticut realized their mistake when in 1954 McCarthy was censured.

It was Benton's defeat which made an opening for the election of Sen. Dodd.

Note: In the opinion of this writer, the vast majority of Senators are scrupulously honest. But they are not scrupulous about protecting their reputations by policing their membership.

© 1966, Bell-McClure Syndicate, Inc.